

# Transcript of the Testimony of

**Date:** January 9, 2018

**Case:** COMMUNITY MEETING OF THE PROPOSED  
REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE OF NATIONAL  
TEACHERS ACADEMY

**TOOMEY REPORTING**

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CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEAR SOUTH COMMUNITY MEETING #1  
PROPOSED REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE OF NATIONAL  
TEACHERS ACADEMY

January 9, 2018

6:00 p.m.

Illinois Institute of Technology  
Hermann Hall Auditorium

1 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATION:

2  
3 HERALD "CHIP" JOHNSON, Family and Community  
4 Engagement in Education

5 SHANI BOONE, Office of Diverse Learning and  
6 Supports Services

7 LUIS RODRIGUEZ, Office of Diverse Learning and  
8 Supports Services

9 ONSHELLE BLACKMON, Students in Temporary Living  
10 Situations

11 TIFFANY TAYLOR, Talent Office  
12  
13  
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15  
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1 MR. JOHNSON: Good evening, everyone. Let's  
2 see if we can come together so we have time to  
3 hear from all your community constituents tonight.

4 If you can grab your seats, I'm going to  
5 do a short presentation prior to public comments.  
6 I would like to say good evening to everybody,  
7 South Loop, Drake, Chinatown, all of our  
8 communities, and to everybody who came to be a  
9 part of this community meeting tonight.

10 We have a lot to listen to, a lot to  
11 present, and we want to do it in a respectful  
12 manner tonight. We know that all voices are  
13 important, so we want to make sure we hear them  
14 appropriately. If you get to your seats, we'll  
15 begin the presentation.

16 So this meeting is part of the  
17 reassignment boundary change for National Teachers  
18 Academy, which was proposed to the board on  
19 December 1st following months of community  
20 engagement leading up to the announcement.

21 You all have seen me. I am Chip Johnson,  
22 the chief officer for Family and Community  
23 Engagement for Chicago Public Schools, and I have  
24 been part of this process since its inception

1 here.

2 We are here today on behalf of our acting  
3 CEO, Dr. Janice Jackson, to share some basic  
4 information and to hear from you about the  
5 specific proposal. I'd also like to introduce to  
6 some -- those that are here, Alderman Pat Dowell,  
7 who's here with us tonight from the 3rd Ward and  
8 Alderson Patrick Thompson from the 11th Ward.

9 (Applause.)

10 We also have -- remember, we're doing  
11 respect. Thank you. We also have some principals  
12 here in the building that are from some of our  
13 schools. Would all of our Chicago Public Schools  
14 principals please stand and be recognized for your  
15 leadership. Just stand right where you are.

16 (Applause.)

17 So as I mentioned before, the purpose of  
18 this meeting is to allow CEO Jackson and the board  
19 office to hear feedback from you about the  
20 specific proposal under discussion. I will start  
21 by running through a brief description tonight,  
22 and then I will give you the information on the  
23 community information, how we will conduct it.  
24 And after this, we will allow the remaining time

1 for you, the public comment.

2 In addition, we have representatives here  
3 from the Office of Diverse Learning Supports and  
4 Services, Shani Boone and Luis Rodriguez from  
5 ODLSS; students living in temporary situations,  
6 STLS program, Onshelle Blackmon; and then from the  
7 Talent department, we have Tiffany Taylor that are  
8 in the room.

9 They will be available for 30 minutes  
10 after the conclusion of the public comment to  
11 answer any questions you may have specific to  
12 their areas of expertise. Please note that these  
13 tablets are not formally part of the process, and  
14 the stenographer that you see here that is taking  
15 notes and the notetaker will not be present in  
16 those conversations to record any comments that  
17 are made.

18 The community meeting will take place  
19 over the course of 2 hours from now until 8:00  
20 o'clock, and my goal is to provide a brief  
21 presentation followed by comment. If you do not  
22 have a chance to comment, you can always provide  
23 your comments at [transitions.edu](http://transitions.edu) -- I'm sorry,  
24 [transitions@cps.edu](mailto:transitions@cps.edu), and that will be on the slide

1 presentation.

2           You can also submit written comments at  
3 the registration desk and said members at the desk  
4 will provide notecards for written comments, if  
5 you have not yet received one. For additional  
6 information, please reference the transition plan  
7 regarding the school action at [cps.edu/transitions](http://cps.edu/transitions)  
8 where you can find all of the information needed.

9           In addition meeting summaries for each  
10 community meeting will be available online, okay,  
11 within 5 days after each meeting, and you can  
12 access it at the website.

13           So this is tonight's agenda. The  
14 introduction of logistics, the school action  
15 presentation, and then the public comment will  
16 probably begin right at 6:20.

17           This meeting is part of a broader  
18 timeline regarding the proposed actions. And  
19 after these meetings and the hearing, we will  
20 review all input. After this CEO Jackson will  
21 make a recommendation to the board to vote on the  
22 proposed action.

23           Following the potential recommendation,  
24 the board will vote on whether or not to approve

1 the proposed action at the February Board of  
2 Education meeting, okay.

3 All right. This is our format for  
4 tonight. You'll see that we'll present a short  
5 presentation. Then CPS will listen. Each  
6 participant will have 2 minutes to ask questions  
7 or provide public comments. Each participant will  
8 receive notice when there are 30 seconds left and  
9 the 2-minute mark. If you did not have the chance  
10 to comment, as I said before, you can put your  
11 information in at the desk outside.

12 All right. So over the past year, we  
13 have engaged various communities on this proposal  
14 and have had good feedback and formed adjustments  
15 to the proposal. We heard from various  
16 communities, as you see here. We heard from  
17 Drake, Haines, Healy, NTA, South Loop, Ward;  
18 community members from Armour Square, Bronzeville,  
19 Bridgeport, Chinatown, and South Loop. We also  
20 heard from aldermen and state representatives.

21 We have conducted three large community  
22 meetings between May and June of 2017. We had  
23 five meetings of the steering committee comprised  
24 of community leaders across these groups, over 30



1 small group meetings with various stakeholders,  
2 and received over 900 emails at the  
3 cps.edu/transitions website.

4 In this engagement, we heard a lot of  
5 feedback from various perspectives, including  
6 those interested in high school and potential  
7 boundaries, as well as others who want to maintain  
8 NTA as an elementary school, including its strong  
9 culture and staff.

10 We worked to adjust our proposal in  
11 response to various points of feedback, including  
12 expanding the South Loop boundaries to incorporate  
13 all of NTA's current boundary and releasing an  
14 initial draft boundary and releasing the boundary  
15 for community feedback.

16 We also wanted to take time to explain  
17 the proposal and where it stands today and  
18 continue to gather feedback through these  
19 community meetings.

20 So as we move into the proposal, you'll  
21 see all the proposed changes are scheduled to  
22 begin in school year 2019 and 2020. On the  
23 elementary side, this proposal involves a new  
24 state-of-the-art South Loop facility, three-campus

1 model at South Loop, and expanding South Loop's  
2 boundary to encompass all of NTA's current  
3 boundary over time.

4 On the potential high school conversion,  
5 as you see on the graph, this proposal involves  
6 NTA, rather than converting to a high school over  
7 time, transitioning grades pre-K to 3 to South  
8 Loop while allowing students in grades 4 through 8  
9 to remain at NTA or to transfer to South Loop and  
10 provide a guaranteed seat for all NTA students to  
11 attend the high school regardless of where they  
12 live.

13 In the following slides, we will go  
14 through a few details of this proposal. In terms  
15 of the high school conversion timeline, this  
16 proposal involves the following changes for  
17 2019/2020: Transition of pre-K program at NTA to  
18 South Loop; enrolling incoming kindergarten  
19 students at South Loop; rising students in grades  
20 1 through 3 will be reassigned to South Loop or  
21 have the option to transfer to another school; NTA  
22 students in grades 4 through 8 to either stay at  
23 NTA or transition to South Loop.

24 All NTA students will have a guaranteed

1 seat of the high school regardless of where they  
2 live.

3 Starting in school year 2019/2020, NTA  
4 would begin a gradual conversion to a high school  
5 over time. As you can see below, NTA would  
6 contain students in grades 4 through 9 in  
7 2019/2020 years. In subsequent years, NTA would  
8 gradually phase in high school grades while  
9 phasing out the elementary school grades.

10 So by school year 2022/'23, NTA would  
11 contain students in grades 7 through 12 and in  
12 school year 2024 through '25 and beyond, NTA would  
13 only contain the high school grades 9 through 12.

14 We will ensure that high school and  
15 elementary grade transitions will be managed with  
16 the appropriate safety and security  
17 considerations.

18 In terms of the transition for specific  
19 NTA students, starting in 2019/2020, the pre-K  
20 program at NTA program will be located at South  
21 Loop.

22 For students in the neighborhood program,  
23 rising kindergarten students that live in the  
24 current boundaries of NTA will be zoned to South

1 Loop. NTA will not offer a kindergartener option.

2 Rising 1st through 3rd grade students at  
3 NTA will be reassigned to South Loop regardless of  
4 where they live. They would also have the option  
5 to transfer to other elementary schools. Staff  
6 will be available from the Office of Access and  
7 Enrollment. They will help students and families  
8 if they wish to explore other options.

9 Rising 4th through 8th grade students can  
10 stay at NTA through graduation or transfer to  
11 South Loop's neighborhood track. They can also  
12 decide to transfer to South Loop in subsequent  
13 school years.

14 For students in the regional gifted  
15 program, the RGC program for kindergarten through  
16 3rd grade will be located at South Loop. In  
17 subsequent years, the RGC program will phase in  
18 grades at South Loop.

19 Rising NTA RGC students will be  
20 reassigned to the RGC program at South Loop. They  
21 will also have the option to transfer to other  
22 elementary schools.

23 Also, staff from the Office of Access and  
24 Enrollment will help students and families if they

1 wish to explore other options as well.

2 The RGC programs for grades 4 through 8  
3 would remain at NTA and phase out over time. They  
4 would also have the option to transfer in to South  
5 Loop neighborhood track in 2019/'20 and in future  
6 years.

7 In terms of how the elementary school  
8 boundary will change, South Loop's boundary will  
9 expand to include all of NTA's current boundary  
10 over time. This boundary change over time is in  
11 sequence with the transition of elementary school  
12 students and the phaseout of elementary school  
13 grades at NTA.

14 So, for example, in school year  
15 2019/2020, kindergarten through 3rd grade at NTA  
16 transitions to South Loop; and likewise, the  
17 boundary for kindergarten through 3rd grade  
18 students in NTA's current boundary will be South  
19 Loop.

20 NTA will offer grades 4 through 8, so the  
21 boundaries for students in grades 4 through 8's  
22 NTA current boundary will still be NTA.

23 All students residing in this boundary in  
24 grades 4 through 8 will also have the option to

1 attend South Loop Elementary School.

2 We recognize that this change will be  
3 difficult for some families and students. We  
4 engaged both NTA and South Loop parents in  
5 developing this transition plan, including  
6 multiple steering committee meetings.

7 Ultimately we developed a draft plan that  
8 budgets 3.5 million to support that transition of  
9 NTA students to South Loop and the coming together  
10 of these two school communities.

11 So some of the key transitions that we  
12 included were: The budget for variety and events  
13 activities designed to support community building  
14 and culture integration, starting the year prior  
15 to any proposed actions.

16 Another one was creating of a Joint  
17 Culture and Climate Team comprised of staff,  
18 parents, and student representatives from both NTA  
19 and South Loop.

20 Then the principal and school-based  
21 transition coordinators to assist with  
22 implementation of new programs and practices at  
23 each school. We would also provide logistical  
24 support, examples are recording transfers and the

1 like, and the other supports identified by both  
2 schools' leadership.

3 Implementation of restorative practices:  
4 Professional development and training  
5 opportunities for all school staff and  
6 transportation for transferring NTA students to  
7 commute to South Loop Elementary School.

8 In addition, as part of this proposal,  
9 all NTA students as of 2018/'19, regardless of  
10 where they live, will have a guaranteed seat at  
11 the high school as they matriculate from the  
12 elementary school to the high school.

13 Following months of asks from community  
14 members, we wanted to release a draft boundary to  
15 gather feedback on the proposal. To develop this  
16 draft, we gathered input from community leaders in  
17 the near south area incorporating all effective  
18 stakeholders. Conversations with the near south  
19 steering committee were an integral component.

20 Ultimately based on these discussions, we  
21 released draft boundaries that incorporate both a  
22 neighborhood as well as a preference boundary,  
23 which I will explain later.

24 As you can see in the map, the proposed

1 neighborhood boundary incorporates the current  
2 elementary school boundaries of the following  
3 schools: Drake, Haines, Healy, NTA, South Loop,  
4 and James Ward.

5 The proposed preference boundary  
6 incorporates the current elementary school  
7 boundaries of both Armour and Holden and Pershing.  
8 The addition of the preference boundary allows us  
9 to expand quality high school options and  
10 opportunities for students in nearby communities  
11 and help foster the diversity in the school.

12 In terms of what each boundary means for  
13 parents and students, I will explain. The  
14 neighborhood boundary gives students living in the  
15 boundary a guaranteed seat at the school.

16 Many high school students choose to  
17 attend schools other than their neighborhood  
18 school. Across the district, approximately  
19 22 percent of high school students attend their  
20 neighborhood school. The preference boundary  
21 gives preference to students living in the  
22 boundary over other students in the city based on  
23 the number of available seats.

24 If too few students from the preference



1 boundary want to attend, then the remaining seats  
2 would go to students from the rest of the city.

3 If too many students from the preference boundary  
4 would want to attend, then CPS would conduct a  
5 lottery for the remaining seats.

6 We do not anticipate a lottery based on  
7 current enrollment projections, which we will  
8 review here on the next slide.

9 There are 2,037 high-school-age students  
10 living in the boundary area, including both  
11 neighborhood and preference boundaries. These  
12 students would make up one of the most diverse  
13 high school communities in the city with  
14 27 percent of African-Americans attending,  
15 19 percent Hispanic, 41 percent Asian, and 74  
16 low-income students.

17 The estimated capacity of the high school  
18 is between 1,000 and 1200 students, depending on  
19 the final space configuration if the proposal is  
20 to move forward.

21 Based upon school preference among  
22 current students in the area and enrollment  
23 patterns at other highly sought-after neighborhood  
24 schools, projected enrollment among students

1 living in the neighborhood boundary is not  
2 expected to exceed 50 percent.

3 Based on current enrollment projections,  
4 this would allow students in both the neighborhood  
5 and preference boundary to attend the school.

6 This projection has been based on an  
7 analysis of highly sought-after schools with  
8 neighborhood boundaries, such as Lincoln Park High  
9 School, which draws only 46 percent of students  
10 living in its boundary.

11 In addition, 60 percent of the current  
12 high school students who live in the draft  
13 boundary area already attend a selective  
14 enrollment or a Level 1 Plus high school.

15 That's the presentation.

16 Moving into public comment, before we get  
17 started with the public comment section, I wanted  
18 to go over a few logistics and the guidelines for  
19 a very good conducive and respectful meeting.

20 Prior to public participation, we will  
21 provide an opportunity for city, state, and  
22 federal elected officials to speak, which they  
23 have already been invited to. I think they have  
24 withheld that request just yet.

1           During the public participation, each  
2 speaker that has signed up to speak will have  
3 2 minutes to share their thoughts. You will get a  
4 warning at the one-minute mark when there are  
5 30 seconds remaining and when time is up.

6           Speakers must speak at the podium. You  
7 see that microphone over here. Please do not  
8 touch or grab the microphone. The sound booth is  
9 controlling it from above.

10          And please remember that the purpose of  
11 this meeting is to hear from those that are in  
12 attendance and that there's both a stenographer,  
13 who's seated right here, capturing every remark,  
14 as well as the CPS notetaker sitting right here at  
15 the table at this meeting.

16          In the interest of time, we will  
17 generally not be responding to any questions or  
18 comments at this meeting.

19          Please remember that the stenographer can  
20 only capture the speaker's remarks if there's no  
21 additional noise, so it's important that we  
22 respect the speakers at the mic. So please keep  
23 your voices down in the audience when there are  
24 speakers so that she can hear to get the notes

1 recorded accordingly.

2 The meeting is scheduled to end at  
3 8:00 p.m. The comment period will last until the  
4 scheduled end time of the meeting. If translation  
5 is required, each speaker will have their  
6 full-time, and then the translator will share a  
7 summary of the speakers' comments. We also have  
8 sign language interpreters for anybody that may  
9 need that, and she's sitting right up here in the  
10 front row.

11 So you want to start your remarks with  
12 your name and affiliation with the school so it  
13 can be a part of the official record. And if you  
14 did not have a chance to comment, again, you can  
15 take a card at the back and write your comments,  
16 leave it at the desk, and we will submit it to  
17 cps.edu/transitions.

18 For additional information, please  
19 reference the transition plan regarding the school  
20 action at the same website. In addition, meeting  
21 summaries for each community meeting will be  
22 available online at the website within 5 days of  
23 the meetings. I keep saying the website. It's  
24 cps.edu/transitions.

1           In addition, a reminder that we have  
2 representatives from ODLSS, temporary living  
3 situations, and talent office, who will be  
4 available for 30 minutes after the meeting, again,  
5 to have -- answer any questions that you may have.  
6 Please note that the tablets are not formally part  
7 of the process, so those will be private  
8 conversations between you and that person.

9           To begin the public comment section, I  
10 would like to give -- I'm going to scratch that.  
11 Because we have so many elected officials, they  
12 always get the opportunity to say if they want to  
13 speak first. I think we have vetted that right  
14 now, and that's not to say they won't speak at any  
15 time during the meeting. But right now, they've  
16 declined to speak at the beginning.

17           We will now begin to call participants  
18 who have registered to speak. So at this time,  
19 Karim Pender will be navigating the microphone  
20 over here. Would speakers No. 1 through 5 please  
21 line up behind the podium in this aisle right  
22 here.

23           We will continue to call speakers up in  
24 advance to allow the most people to speak. Note,

1 you will be responsible for calling up subsequent  
2 speakers, and we will keep a consistent line.  
3 Speaker flow, we will continue to keep the flow  
4 going as we move from 1 through 5 and then 5  
5 through 10.

6 As a reminder, please start your remarks  
7 with your name, your affiliation with the school  
8 so they can be part of the record. Again, if you  
9 go past 2 minutes, the timekeeper -- where is our  
10 timekeeper? There you are -- [inaudible] from the  
11 local school council will be serving as our  
12 timekeeper.

13 At this point, the speaker will be asked  
14 to please conclude their remarks or other similar  
15 phrases that you are comfortable with. We will  
16 not be disrespectful, okay, and we don't want you  
17 to be either.

18 Do not allow any individual to walk away  
19 with the microphone, please. And speakers please  
20 speak loudly. And if I can get that request from  
21 the sound, if you can raise the sound level up so  
22 we can make sure that our stenographer and our  
23 note keeper can hear the sound when speakers begin  
24 to speak.

1 Any questions related to the transition  
2 plans or any other information will be answered  
3 directly at the table if you request any further  
4 information. Any questions not covered, we want  
5 to thank you for your comments. Again, you can  
6 submit your information to the  
7 cps.edu/transitions.

8 So I think you've heard enough of me, and  
9 you've seen the presentation. Tonight is for you,  
10 and we want to hear from all of you all. Your  
11 voices, again, are important. But it's also  
12 important that we're able to hear the voices.

13 We also want to be respectful of our  
14 language. We do have children, wonderful children  
15 from NTA, from South Loop from all of our schools.  
16 At the end of the day, these proposed actions  
17 affect our children, and it's all about what we  
18 are doing for the children in the City of Chicago  
19 and Chicago Public Schools.

20 So to further not delay, let's move to  
21 speaker No. 1.

22 LA SHON BOSTON: Hello. My name is LaShon  
23 Boston, and I am a 7th grade former student at  
24 NTA. I've been here since 3rd grade, and these

1 last 4 years have been great. This school is a  
2 wonderful school that love children that depend on  
3 it. This is not okay. This great school is a  
4 Plus 1 school of excellence, but we are still in  
5 the decision of being built to a high school.

6 My 4 years have been fun, and I always  
7 have felt safe and protected. My first little  
8 brother JV won't be affected by this. My other  
9 brother Josiah Boston will be affected. And I  
10 would hate for him to miss out on the wonderful  
11 times I had, and I would hate him not to have seen  
12 that.

13 So I don't know. It's like kind of,  
14 like, upset to kind of like see how -- well, I  
15 kind of miss this school, even though I'll be  
16 graduating. I still have like other little  
17 brothers that still go to this school, and they  
18 kind of like depend on this so -- and also we have  
19 wonderful teachers and a wonderful principal, vice  
20 principal, and everything.

21 It's a wonderful school, and I would hate  
22 to see this school be closed down and ...

23 JAMES VULNER: My name is James Vulner. I'm  
24 a South Loop resident. And since I was illegally



1 forced to declare my allegiance before being  
2 allowed to speak, I choose to be for a high school  
3 plan, just not this one. I cannot support a plan  
4 based on lies, and neither should you.

5 Lies to sell this plan: No. 1, NTA is  
6 not closing. NTA is an elementary school. If you  
7 change it to a high school, it is different. If I  
8 go to a hotdog stand today and I come back  
9 tomorrow and it's a taco stand, the hotdog stand  
10 is closed.

11 No. 2, the alderman and the CEO of  
12 Chicago Public Schools are out there saying it is  
13 a tale of two cities at NTA. Well, a tale of two  
14 cities, they're saying the RGC students and the  
15 neighborhood children go to different high schools  
16 and don't have the same opportunity. How do you  
17 know? Our RGC only goes to the 5th grade, so  
18 you're out there telling lies to sell a plan that  
19 makes no sense.

20 No. 3: Everyone in the boundary is going  
21 to get a seat. I know we're not [inaudible] CPS,  
22 but when you have 650 students per class  
23 graduating and there's only 250 seats, someone is  
24 going to be left out. Remember that, Chinatown.

1           Lie No. 4: The NTA students can  
2 successfully be integrated into a school that  
3 successfully kicked them out 10 years ago.

4           No. 5, we can convert that school for  
5 \$10 million. For \$10 million, we can raise the  
6 urinals from here to here and maybe convert the  
7 pool. That's about it.

8           MR. POINTER: John Pointer, NTA staff, to my  
9 family, to my friends, to my staff: I want you to  
10 know -- will you all please stand up so you can  
11 hear this. This is NTA family. This is a family  
12 that has built NTA, has lived NTA, has did  
13 everything in their power to take care of NTA.

14           I've been there since 2002. I have  
15 opened a book in that building. And to see the  
16 book closed on that building is not right. And at  
17 the end, we need to stay together because we make  
18 NTA what it is. It is Plus, it is Level 1, we  
19 need to stay there. We need not to go anywhere,  
20 but stay NTA.

21           South Loop kids, if you want to come to  
22 NTA, we'll take care of you. Yes, we'll take care  
23 of you. If you all want to build another South  
24 Loop, you can build that for the high school.

1 That will be the high school. But NTA is NTA. No  
2 other way. We cannot every change NTA. You  
3 cannot take NTA from us because we live NTA.

4 I've been there to live it. I've been  
5 there to see it, and I've seen it develop. I've  
6 seen some of the best years come out of that  
7 building. I've seen some of the finest  
8 administrators come through that building. And to  
9 take it away, it ain't right. It ain't right.

10 So this is what we going to do. We going  
11 to stick together, and we going to fight it out  
12 until you all make a decision. All kids is kids.  
13 Not this kid here, not this kid here. We fight  
14 together. We stay together.

15 Until the parents -- the parents fight  
16 real hard. They fight. I commend them. I  
17 commend them because they want special kids. Any  
18 kids are always welcome to come to NTA. We will  
19 never turn you away. We will take care of you.  
20 If you want to know NTA, come through our doors  
21 and find out. Don't use lies. Don't use  
22 suggestions that you think that is right when it's  
23 wrong. We right here. We all here. This is what  
24 we believe in. We believe in NTA. And we going

1 to live until we die, so that's what we going to  
2 do.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. PENDER: Speakers 6 through 10 can begin  
5 lining up. Speakers 6 through 10.

6 BEN SHIAMA: My name is Ben Shiama. I'm the  
7 parent of a South Loop student and NTA student.  
8 I've got feet in both wells. And I feel like the  
9 very first question that needs to be asked at  
10 every one of these meetings, at every one of these  
11 presentations, needs to be what are we sacrificing  
12 NTA for?

13 It needs to be what we sacrificing the  
14 part work of Principal Castelaz, the fantastic  
15 teachers and staff at that school, Mr. Pointer --  
16 who I've got to follow -- what are we sacrificing  
17 all that work for?

18 And it's not lost on me that most of the  
19 voices at these community meetings that expressed  
20 support for a neighborhood high school option has  
21 been just that: support for a neighborhood high  
22 school option. It's a vision of what they see in  
23 their heads, of what they want.

24 However, the voices of those who have

1   opposed this plan see it for what it is. They  
2   look past what could be with that building and  
3   they see what's being promised and how it doesn't  
4   add up.

5           And that just seems to -- well, let's put  
6   it this way: I see these new proposed boundaries,  
7   and I'm even more convinced of the fact that once  
8   you look at the details, there's no way you can  
9   support this.

10          For the schools that are part of the  
11   guaranteed boundary, you have math there. The  
12   math I have from own CPS's website says that  
13   that's about 500 kids per class, per grade level,  
14   which is twice the size of the available boundary  
15   of NTA.

16          The lottery is another 150 seats, which  
17   means they're pretty much out. You add the  
18   private schools, the private elementary schools,  
19   Francis Xavier or British School, Old St. Mary's,  
20   St. Therese, VCA, Daystars, St. Jerome, Cuffe  
21   Tech, Santa Lucia, and more than I'm sure I  
22   missed, that's another 350 seats.

23          What are we going to do with NTA?  
24   Suddenly going to double in size? What are we

1 sacrificing NTA for? And I don't see the numbers.  
2 I don't see the numbers.

3 And, finally, to my alderman, to  
4 Mr. Thompson, you are the 11th Ward alderman. I'm  
5 in your ward, and I ask you respectfully, why are  
6 you supporting this? Looking at a map of your  
7 word, half of the map, half of your ward is out of  
8 the school. Another quarter is out by virtue of  
9 being in the lottery. Please tell us why are you  
10 supporting something that cuts out [inaudible].  
11 Thank you.

12 JESSE SHARKEY: My name is Jesse Sharkey.  
13 I'm the vice president of the Chicago Teachers  
14 Union. And on behalf of 25,000 teachers, PSPs,  
15 and the clinicians that make the entire school of  
16 the city go every day, I want to firmly state our  
17 opposition to this plan to phase out and close  
18 NTA.

19 The plan is ill-conceived, and it  
20 undermines the academic success of a jewel of a  
21 neighborhood school. CPS [inaudible] are  
22 punishing those schools which struggle the most.  
23 Since 2004, what CPS has done is it has used low  
24 test scores in literally dozens of schools in

1 black and Latino neighborhoods across the city,  
2 they've used low test schools as a club to beat  
3 down the morale and then justification for closing  
4 those schools.

5           It never made any sense to me, you know,  
6 to close the schools that were -- performed the  
7 lowest that were also in the poorest  
8 neighborhoods. You know, want to stay off the  
9 list? Raise your scores, they say. It never made  
10 much sense. But at least we understood it. At  
11 least it was rationale that if you taught in the  
12 school, if you worked hard and you were involved  
13 in local school council, you were a parent, at  
14 least you knew how to keep your school from being  
15 closed.

16           But not NTA. And CPS proposed to turn  
17 this proposition that we've lived by for the last  
18 15 years exactly on its head. And we're going to  
19 close a high-performing school because CPS wants a  
20 building for a gentrifying neighborhood, and  
21 that's what it is.

22           It's bad enough that CPS closed schools  
23 based on the values of tests. Now we're closing  
24 schools based on the values of condominiums, and

1 we shouldn't do it.

2 And the last thing we are told is that  
3 closing NTA will actually help racial integration  
4 and will be a blow to racial justice in this city.  
5 Bull. You cannot stand for racial justice, which  
6 we must have in the city, which we must have in  
7 the schools, we must have racial justice.

8 But you cannot do that by attacking a  
9 successful school that manages to have students of  
10 all races work together in fine academic success.  
11 You don't punish your successful schools. You  
12 don't do it.

13 Again, the Chicago Teachers Union firmly  
14 opposes the plan to phase out and close NTA. We  
15 ask CEO Janice Jackson and the rest of the Board  
16 of Ed to vote no on this plan.

17 Thank you.

18 PASTOR GRANBERRY: Good evening. My name is  
19 pastor Earl Granberry, and I've been in the South  
20 Loop for 36 years. Change is hard. But parents I  
21 want to share something with you. Don't think  
22 with your emotions. Make sure you think about  
23 your children. Don't you get so caught up in this  
24 that you hurt your children. Don't make the



1 decision that you going to regret.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Whose children are you  
3 talking about?

4 PASTOR GRANBERRY: Let me finish. You didn't  
5 interrupt nobody else. Stay in your place.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Can we have a little bit more  
7 sound at the mic, please? Let's be respectful and  
8 allow the speakers to speak. Thank you.

9 PASTOR GRANBERRY: I know change is hard, but  
10 don't think with your emotions. This is good for  
11 every child. You may not see it now. If you  
12 would stop thinking with your emotions and look at  
13 the plan, they already put the plan up there and  
14 showed it to you, but there are lies and rumors  
15 out here. Don't manipulate your children. That's  
16 what you're doing. You're manipulating your  
17 children. This will help your children and not  
18 hurt your children.

19 I'm not going to get into debate with  
20 you. Just stop thinking with your emotions.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. We have the next  
23 speaker. Let's respect the speaker, please.  
24 Thank you.

1           We have a child at the mic.

2           JASMINE: Hello, my name is Jasmine, and I am  
3           third grade student from NTA. I don't want my  
4           school to be taken away. We are a 1 Plus school.  
5           I learned reading, science, swimming, and math.  
6           My school is a Level 1 Plus. My school, I don't  
7           want us to lose it. I love the way my classmates  
8           are nice. They made our school a 1 Plus school.  
9           My teacher taught me a lot of things, and I don't  
10          want that to go away. Please don't take away my  
11          school. Please.

12          DENARDA JONES: I'm sorry. My name is  
13          Denarda Jones. I'm a parent. I have two  
14          daughters at NTA.

15          MR. JOHNSON: Move in closer, please.

16          DENARDA JONES: And my daughters were from a  
17          displaced school. Their previous school had  
18          closed, and they moved them into another school.  
19          And it was not good. My daughters was not doing  
20          good at all.

21                 And before when I moved them to NTA, they  
22          have went from being D's and F's to A's and B's.  
23          So the staff is phenomenal. I have never -- I  
24          have never seen a more involved principal. The

1 teachers are so -- they care about the students so  
2 much that I trust them completely with my  
3 children.

4 So I beg, please do not close this  
5 school. This is the best school in the South  
6 Loop.

7 Thank you.

8 MASUL MARTY: My name is Masul Marty. I have  
9 a child at NTA as well as South Loop. National  
10 Teachers Academy ignites momentum, inspiring black  
11 youth to be future leaders that will create a just  
12 society.

13 President Barak Obama declared that  
14 education is the civil rights issue of our time,  
15 and NTA is transforming the lives of generations  
16 of black people. So why is CPS eliminating NTA?

17 NTA serves students that are 75 percent  
18 African-American and 75 percent economically  
19 disadvantaged. NTA students outperform 75 percent  
20 of students across the country. In fact, 7th and  
21 8th graders were greater academically than  
22 90 percent of students nationwide.

23 So why is CPS eliminating NTA? CPS  
24 declares there are [inaudible] more white South

1 Loop families don't send their children to  
2 Phillips, the zone high school. CPS says  
3 converting NTA into a high school provides South  
4 Loop families a peace of mind by guaranteeing  
5 access to a quality high school.

6 Translation: Phillips is not high  
7 quality for more affluent or white families. So  
8 why is CPS eliminating NTA? As Pastor Granberry  
9 said, all kids deserve access to a high-quality  
10 high school in their community. While Phillips is  
11 not high quality for South Loop families, CPS has  
12 made Phillips the receiving school for any  
13 Englewood students currently being evicted.  
14 Translation: Phillips is high quality for less  
15 affluent and black families.

16 So why is CPS eliminating NTA? CPS says  
17 years ago, boundaries were down that excluded and  
18 separated low-income black children. And now that  
19 NTA is transforming the lives of these same black  
20 children, CPS decides they want to right the  
21 historical wrong.

22 How is eliminating NTA, a vital community  
23 resource and preventing generations of low-income  
24 black children from attending the school that is

1 transforming and igniting future black leaders,  
2 the right thing to do?

3 While Chicago aspires to be one Chicago,  
4 we know the reality. Chicago is a  
5 hyper-segregated city dividing the have and have  
6 nots. I thought as Chicagoans embrace this unjust  
7 action as a catalyst for change but need to create  
8 a just society, we choose, we decide.

9 MR. PENDER: Speakers 11 through 15, line up.  
10 Speakers 11 through 15. Also keep your face away  
11 from the mic. Speak directly into the mic. Thank  
12 you.

13 LAZARIA TENANT: My name is Lazaria Tenant,  
14 and I am in 4th grade. And I am an honor roll  
15 student, and I have a sister in 1st grade. And if  
16 me and my sister get split up, my mom won't have  
17 enough for me and my sister to get to school.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. PENDER: Once again, we can have speakers  
20 11 through 15 begin to line up. Speakers 11  
21 through 15.

22 DAVID WU: My name is David Wu. I'm with  
23 Coalition for Better Chinese American Community.

24 Since I looked at the high school

1 boundary map yesterday, I've been named a couple  
2 times racist, classless, and whether or not I'm  
3 living up to religious convictions.

4 One of my friends asked me, you don't  
5 have to respond to that. But I told him, I just  
6 take a deep breath, try not to react, and try to  
7 answer the questions factually.

8 You know, whether or not you believe that  
9 CPS should not close a Level 1 Plus school or  
10 whether you think that CPS should convert the  
11 school into a high school that's very diverse,  
12 serving a very low-income area in Bronzeville,  
13 Bridgeport, you don't have to be accused of being  
14 racist or classless or having your religious  
15 convictions questioned. I'm glad we're not  
16 hearing much of that day, but it doesn't have to  
17 be that.

18 Chinatown CPS supports the high school  
19 conversion and boundary as it serves a huge area  
20 that has never had its own high school. You know,  
21 40, 50 years, people have been going far away to  
22 schools. Very few schools have responded to our  
23 needs, providing, helping our kids to have good  
24 bilingual programs.

1           And so having a school close by serves  
2           that need. Sarah here talked to us yesterday, and  
3           I totally disagreed with her introduction to the  
4           piece. She said Chinatown was celebrating this.  
5           And we are not celebrating this because to make a  
6           diverse high school, there's kids, Hispanic,  
7           Chinese, Asian American, white, from different  
8           backgrounds, it's not going to be easy. But  
9           Chinatown is committed to making it work.

10           Thank you.

11           AUDREY JOHNSON: Good evening. I am Audrey  
12           Johnson, a parent at National Teachers Academy  
13           and a former student -- a parent, a former  
14           resident of the Hearl B. Homes (phonetic), born  
15           and raised.

16           You all keep talking about -- you keep  
17           passing there, you keep talking about we getting  
18           the wrong information. Who are you? I don't even  
19           know you. As a pastor, I ain't never seen you  
20           come to the Hearl B. Homes and support our  
21           community, nor National Teachers Academy. I have  
22           a brick in the building.

23           MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you. Let's  
24           address the issue.

1           AUDREY JOHNSON: Now for your school, our  
2 district not only serves our kids, it serve our  
3 seniors, it serve our Chinese community, it serve  
4 our kids during the summertime. So what happens  
5 with our children in our community? We got enough  
6 killing going on. That's what happens all summer.  
7 Or what happens to our seniors that don't have  
8 nothing to do. They come over and swim in the  
9 morning, get they self together.

10           You all going to take it away for you all  
11 benefit? When those buildings was up, it was  
12 cool. We support you all. You had our votes.  
13 Now the buildings is down, you don't need us no  
14 more. Use South Loop. But you won't use them for  
15 NTA. You sure won't. And you keep putting us  
16 back down, talk about misleading our kids. Our  
17 kids know exactly what's going on. You know why?  
18 Because they come from NTA. And we make sure that  
19 they know what's going on. So all you grown  
20 adults, save it. Tell your own kids.

21           MR. PENDER: Speakers 16 through 20 may line  
22 up. Speakers No. 16 through 20.

23           JOY CLENDENING: Good evening, everyone.  
24 I'll try that again. Good evening. I'm Joy



1 Clendening. I'm a parent of two CPS graduates and  
2 two current CPS students. I'm the [inaudible] --  
3 raise your hand for Illinois public education.  
4 Raise your hand here tonight to stand with the  
5 amazing students, parents, teachers, and staff of  
6 NTA.

7 We oppose the closing of NTA, which is  
8 falsely labeled a reassignment boundary change.

9 For years, CPS has used questionable  
10 measures in their school action decisions, closing  
11 so-called low-performing schools based on narrow  
12 metrics of test scores or closing so-called  
13 underutilized schools based on deeply flawed space  
14 utilization formulas, which allows 36 students in  
15 a classroom.

16 We've objected to those standards, and  
17 the lack of a broad context used to analyze how a  
18 school is doing again and again and again. But  
19 schools are forced to adapt to these various  
20 metrics CPS imposes on them as they are judged,  
21 punished, or rewarded.

22 So now CPS has decided to toss their own  
23 rules and close this high-performing  
24 African-American school.

1           We've had the privilege of meeting many  
2 NTA students as they've come out to boldly and  
3 confidently testify, shown us all leadership,  
4 critical thinking, and incredible poise.

5           So tonight, we do want to say, because we  
6 know there may be parents here from Bridgeport who  
7 are just hearing about this, we want to say to  
8 you, do not become part of these racist hunger  
9 games. There are solutions that need to be  
10 considered because black students matter, and we  
11 are all NTA.

12          NADIA: Hi. My name is Nadia. I have two  
13 children at NTA. One is in 4th grade and one is  
14 in kindergarten.

15           A quick story about my 4th grader. The  
16 other day, her teacher emailed me and another  
17 parent, about a conflict she had witnessed between  
18 my daughter and her friend that resulted in hurt  
19 feelings. The conflict itself wasn't surprising.  
20 This is the age where many preteen girls go  
21 through experiences similar to this.

22           What I appreciate, though, was the great  
23 length that her teacher went to help repair that  
24 space. She didn't just ask one girl to apologize

1 to the other, but rather she took them through an  
2 exercise of reflection, listening, accountability,  
3 and working together to resolve the issue so it  
4 wouldn't happen again. This process of  
5 restorative justice where problems are adjusted  
6 head on, healing is prioritized, and justice and  
7 community are at the foundation at all is why my  
8 children are at National Teachers Academy, and  
9 this is what they will lose if NTA is converted  
10 into a high school.

11 The fact that my daughter, who isn't even  
12 10 yet, is engaging in this type of learning every  
13 day in her school gives me hope not only for the  
14 kind of citizen that she and her peers will become  
15 but for the future of this amazing city.

16 I truly believe that tomorrow's activists  
17 and public servants, those who are organizing  
18 rallying on the streets of Chicago and improving  
19 it for its better will come from the National  
20 Teachers Academy.

21 Schools like this should be highlighted,  
22 replicated, and improved, not underutilized or  
23 closed down.

24 Unfortunately, though, we're here today

1 because CPS has decided that it's in the best  
2 interest of the near south community to dismantle  
3 the great working happening at NTA and convert it  
4 to a high school.

5 So tonight, I ask if NTA had been  
6 majority white, would we be standing here before  
7 you tonight? To dismantle a thriving community  
8 school to open a neighborhood high school because  
9 of the belief that there is no viable high school  
10 option in the near south is actually insulting to  
11 the hard work of Phillips and Dunbar and the work  
12 that they have put in their schools to get them to  
13 where they are today.

14 It also enables the South Loop  
15 communities' unfounded racism and classism toward  
16 their school options that they have. Instead, we  
17 should be investing in these institutions and  
18 their 4600 vacancies, rather than creating a  
19 brand-new option at the expense of another  
20 community.

21 So I ask you again, would we be standing  
22 here today if NTA was a majority white school?

23 ELIZABETH GREER: Good evening. My name is  
24 Elizabeth Greer. My 2nd grader started the year

1 at NTA with 35 students in her neighborhood  
2 classroom. Our principal, Mr. Castelaz, knew that  
3 number was unacceptable. And through careful  
4 budgeting, he was able to fund a teacher's  
5 position and open up another classroom.

6 This classroom, however, is no ordinary  
7 classroom. The 2nd grade teachers pulled the  
8 highest achievers and formed a comprehensive  
9 gifted class. My daughter is now in a cohort with  
10 20 other students. Yes, there's 21 students in  
11 her class who are being taught at least one grade  
12 level ahead, and they will remain a cohort until  
13 they graduate from the 8th grade.

14 My black daughter looks around her room  
15 and sees other black students who are just as  
16 smart and high achieving as she is. She is  
17 growing up in an environment where being smart and  
18 black is the rule, not the exception.

19 This is what gives -- this is what NTA  
20 gives to black students like my daughter, and this  
21 is what CPS's racist plan wants to destroy.

22 My father was born in 1941 in the rural  
23 south. When I showed him CPS's proposal, he said,  
24 and I quote, this plan could have been drawn up in

1 Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1950s, line by line,  
2 word by word, end quote.

3 At no time in CPS's history have they  
4 planned to dismantle a Level 1 Plus school; and to  
5 attack NTA in this way in 2018 is to turn back the  
6 clock 60 years, thereby ruining the educational  
7 future of black children who depend on and love  
8 NTA.

9 MR. PENDER: Speakers 21 to 25 may line up.  
10 Speakers 21 to 25.

11 AMY ROME: Hi. My name is Amy Rome. I've  
12 had the privilege of working with and in NTA for  
13 over a decade.

14 While I agree with so much of what's been  
15 said about NTA and the lack of a feasible plan  
16 here for a high school to relieve the overcrowding  
17 of our high schools and the need for a great high  
18 school in the community, but I really want to  
19 focus on the 20 years I spent in that community.

20 I came to the community in 1994 as a  
21 teacher at John C. Haines School and have watched  
22 the families in this community take transition  
23 after transition after transition.

24 First, the tunnel that separated John C.

1 Haines School from where now NTA is would often be  
2 locked in the morning if the Chicago Police  
3 Department didn't have a patrol officer to unlock  
4 it. So we had kids who literally lived in the  
5 Harold Ickes development who had to walk across  
6 the Dan Ryan Expressway ramp to get to school in  
7 the morning.

8 Watched the boundaries at South Loop  
9 Elementary be changed when it was convenient  
10 politically.

11 Watched families from Haines moved to  
12 NTA. Only the African-American families moved to  
13 NTA when NTA opened.

14 Watched South Loop overcrowd, and then  
15 NTA being asked to take a transition of the  
16 regional gifted program into the building.

17 Price was closed. NTA again assumed  
18 another transition.

19 Throughout all these transitions that  
20 really impacted black families in this community,  
21 NTA still, while it opened, was in the bottom --  
22 14 percent of the kids were meeting our city and  
23 state standards as measured by ISTEP at that time.

24 In spite of that, it is now a Level 1

1 Plus school, and we continue to disenfranchise the  
2 families that served by the community. There are  
3 people in this room, both politicians and CPS  
4 officials, [inaudible], Alderman Dowell, who  
5 understand these transitions and understand the  
6 impact on families in this community and still  
7 support a plan that disenfranchises them further.  
8 It's without conscious to put this plan in place.  
9 It's not feasible, and it continues to disrespect  
10 families.

11 RAQUEL DODD: Hi. My name is Raquel Dodd.  
12 I'm a parent from James Work School, an LSD member  
13 there. And I too am a very passionate and  
14 dedicated parent.

15 I am proud to say I am from Bridgeport.  
16 I am the fourth generation to live there. And  
17 there is no public high school in Bridgeport. But  
18 my pride of Bridgeport not only comes from the  
19 multiple generations that my family has been  
20 there, it is in the diversity of our neighborhood.  
21 And I believe that we have enough students in our  
22 neighborhood and the diversity to make a great  
23 high school in the Bridgeport area.

24 Thank you.



1           ELI DIAZ: Hello. My name is Eli Diaz. I'm  
2 a parent from an NTA student. I was asked for or  
3 against the proposal. My opinion is truly  
4 irrelevant. I have no friends in high places. I  
5 was reminded of that when Janice Jackson said  
6 Chicago is Chicago.

7           The truly profound meaning of such a  
8 simple phrase, when I heard Janice say this  
9 through some news interview, it focused my mind  
10 again what is happening here with NTA and the  
11 closing of it. Understanding what was said,  
12 Chicago is Chicago.

13           It's truly very simple. In this case, it  
14 would mean orders from downtown have been given.  
15 Friends and family have been ordered -- awarded  
16 city contracts, and all that's left is for CPS,  
17 cronies or not, is to comply with state mandates  
18 in regards to public hearings and state  
19 guidelines.

20           Their intentions will be made whether it  
21 benefits the greater constituents or not. The  
22 only importance in such cases is whether the  
23 political families of Chicago have received their  
24 share of the spoils.

1           As an NTA parent, I don't come here to  
2 complain of the illnesses that are perpetuated by  
3 downtown but to remind others that our problems  
4 originate with downtown, and our career aldermen  
5 and career commissioners who serve with virtual  
6 tenureship who truly believe that when their  
7 interests are served, that Chicago's interest is  
8 served.

9           If we as people don't want to find  
10 ourselves spitting into the wind again, then a  
11 true effort to replace our career politicians  
12 needs to begin so that people can have a  
13 meaningful representation, so an excellent school  
14 isn't closed to line somebody's pocket.

15          TINA FELDSTEIN: My name is Tina Feldstein.  
16 I am with the Prairie District Neighborhood  
17 Alliance, and I am a long-time South Loop  
18 resident. And I want to be very clear that we're  
19 100 percent in support of this plan.

20          I also want to commend CPS as well as  
21 everyone who has participated and been engaged in  
22 this process for bringing up feedback that has  
23 been applied. So, for example, the expanding of  
24 the boundaries to include the entire NTA boundary,

1 which includes Motor Row. There's been a lot of  
2 cries from people in that area that were cut out  
3 from the new boundary. So the proposed boundary  
4 for the elementary school is a great improvement.

5 At this point, obviously this is still  
6 just a proposal. There are a lot of people that  
7 have been crying and calling for a neighborhood  
8 high school for many, many, many years. We know  
9 Chinatown has for over 40 years. Many people from  
10 the South Loop have been leaving simply because  
11 there's no opportunity. It's so difficult to get  
12 into a selective-enrollment high school.

13 So having a neighborhood high school  
14 that's going to serve such a diversified group in  
15 our community is a huge win and in the long run,  
16 in the long run, we will all look back, if this  
17 proposal is approved, and say that was the best  
18 thing for the whole. For the whole.

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: So you can sell property.  
20 You have no students in either school.

21 TINA FELDSTEIN: So the question I bring up  
22 and I ask, and I'm not sure, maybe the steering  
23 committee has addressed that, maybe it hasn't,  
24 it's still unclear as to how many -- if the

1 proposal were to move forward, how many of the  
2 teachers from NTA would also transition.

3 So I was just curious as to that. I just  
4 wanted to bring up a question. But other than  
5 that, I applaud the process. I really appreciate  
6 that everyone has an opportunity to come and  
7 speak, whether people agree with what they have to  
8 say or not. And I once again want to say we  
9 support the plan.

10 MAE: My name is Mae. I'm a parent of a 1st  
11 grade son at NTA. I wasn't really prepared, but I  
12 just want to share a few things. Number one, I  
13 remember when they come in to pick my son up from  
14 NTA because I was about to lose my job from the  
15 schedule not having an after-school, the fact they  
16 took me in and took my son and told him, walked  
17 him to his project program, not only did that help  
18 me and my son a lot, I was able to keep my job, as  
19 well as be promoted to branch manager.

20 And now being a product recently  
21 graduated 2008 from CPS school under Elizabeth A.  
22 Kirby as a principal, she constantly remind us the  
23 value of going to a good school as opposed to a  
24 school in Englewood I grew up in. She reminded me

1 personally time after time that she could easily  
2 send me back to Harper or Englewood where I came  
3 from.

4           So I value a good education. I have  
5 friends who have kids in lower-funded schools  
6 where they don't have gym, they don't have  
7 [inaudible]. My son has swimming. He has  
8 theater. He has drama. He goes on constant  
9 trips. He had a petting zoo at his school. It  
10 was good. It doesn't stop with NTA. They care  
11 about their kids. They want to teach them a lot.  
12 They learn.

13           I mean, they have a clinic at that school  
14 so when he's sick, as a single parent, a single  
15 mother, I don't have to take off. I can send him  
16 to school and know that he's okay.

17           I moved from Englewood to avoid the  
18 issues of him having to go to different schools,  
19 schools being closed down, to the South Loop area.  
20 And now here we are again. It's just sad that in  
21 this day and age, and we recently within the last  
22 almost 10 years or so, graduated from CPS that  
23 this is what we have to go through.

24           My son asks me every time school is about

1 to start, will I be going back to NTA? What's  
2 going to happen? What's going on? Why is they  
3 closing my school? I really have no answers  
4 except for that you want the guys want the school  
5 for a Chinese high school. Why everyone just  
6 can't get a plan that's equal for everybody and  
7 leave NTA out of it.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Next speaker?

9 DANA METZ: Hi, everyone. I'm Dana Metz.  
10 I'm a resident of the 11th Ward. I have to say  
11 before this meeting, I knew very, very little  
12 about NTA Elementary. It's been extremely eye  
13 opening listening to all of you.

14 No doubt that NTA in its current state is  
15 a great place for our students, so a genuine thank  
16 you to the teachers, faculty, and thank you to the  
17 supportive parents.

18 And I also believe there is a dire need  
19 for a high school in the area, specifically in the  
20 Bridgeport area where I live. So operating under  
21 the premise that this plan does go through, what I  
22 find particularly troubling is the boundaries as  
23 they are laid out right now. You see, I live at  
24 37th Place and Halsted, which is just two tiny

1 blocks outside of the southern boundary. And  
2 right now my two daughters would be excluded from  
3 attending.

4 Now, if you drive south on Halsted -- has  
5 anyone gone south on Halsted, actually south of  
6 35th Street? So you might, if you've driven there  
7 in the past couple years, you might have noticed  
8 an influx of new housing being built. In the  
9 small section right there, it's about 2 to 3  
10 blocks, there have been 150 new homes. 150 new  
11 homes that hold as of today, 200 -- in 6 months,  
12 it might be 250 kids -- so over 200 kids that are  
13 currently excluded from these boundaries, and  
14 we're just part of the story.

15 So I'm here today at the support of my  
16 neighbors to request that the boundaries be --  
17 that the boundaries be extended to include the  
18 entire 11th Ward. I think that's a reasonable  
19 request, and our kids deserve it. So I look  
20 forward to hearing the additional comments, and I  
21 truly hope that we can come to a compromise where  
22 no child is left behind.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. PENDER: Speakers 26 through 28 may line

1 up. Any speakers with the numbers 26 through 28  
2 may line up. Thank you.

3 MIA: Hello. My name is Mia. NTA is my  
4 home, and NTA is a really good school and it is  
5 really nice. It is for all kids in the whole  
6 world, and it is for the core [inaudible] so we  
7 need to keep NTA open. And some teachers will  
8 lose their jobs if we do not keep NTA open. My  
9 classmates are really nice. If NTA closes, I  
10 might never see them again. NTA is one of the  
11 best schools in the world. So please, CPS, don't  
12 turn NTA into a high school.

13 SALEROSA SELA: Can you hear me? My name is  
14 Salerosa Sela. I am Mia's father. She is a  
15 student in the 2nd grade at NTA. I will not  
16 repeat what everybody else has said, but I'll tell  
17 you some facts that I have seen.

18 It's a Level 1 Plus school. We have a  
19 community. We have quality. We have sports. We  
20 have amazing facilities. We have Girl Scouts. It  
21 exists. It is real. It is palpable. We have  
22 black, Latinos, Asians, and whites living in  
23 harmony. We are here to stay. And we deserve  
24 more.



1           We deserve NTA, and we deserve a high  
2 school. We live in Bridgeport, so we have that  
3 concern as well, right. We want a high school  
4 that when Mia finishes at NTA, she can go to. One  
5 of the things that I have learned from this  
6 process is if there's one thing that it has done  
7 to NTA is galvanize us. It has turned us into a  
8 true community. I have made a lot of friends, a  
9 lot of parents, blacks, whites, all kinds of  
10 different religions. It has been the only  
11 positive thing about this process. This is the  
12 jewel of the south side. It is something that CPS  
13 is doing right. CPS is doing this right. This is  
14 a CPS school. So let's keep it open.

15           Thank you.

16           MR. JOHNSON: We have speakers 21 through 25.  
17 Anybody have 26 through 30? Speakers 26 through  
18 30? Let's go to 35.

19           MR. PENDER: 28 is it.

20           DAIQUIRI LUERS: Hello. Can you hear me? My  
21 name is Daiquiri Luers. I'm a long-term resident  
22 of the South Loop. I wasn't going to get up and  
23 say anything because I haven't really prepared.  
24 It's very emotional to sit here and see these

1 kids, see these babies fight for their school.

2 I've lived in the South Loop since I was  
3 single. Well, since a long time ago. And I now  
4 have a nine-year-old. I chose to send my child do  
5 NTA. It's a very special place. I lived in the  
6 South Loop. I know what the attitudes were. I  
7 know that people saw that brand-new facility over  
8 there and didn't know what was going on over there  
9 and thought they were entitled to it.

10 Then I came to visit and saw what was  
11 going on. I saw our brown babies who did not have  
12 as much as my child has who was not as affluent  
13 and getting a wonderful education, and besides  
14 that, a wonderful family. A beautiful place for  
15 our kids to learn and to thrive.

16 So now I ask you, it is now a Level 1  
17 Plus school. Why was it okay, why is it okay to  
18 sacrifice it? Why is NTA expendable? Because  
19 South Loop was not expandable. Those people  
20 wanted -- and I live in that neighborhood. A lot  
21 of people wanted a new facility. They're getting  
22 a new facility. We had a new facility. We could  
23 have accommodated more kids at NTA, but they chose  
24 not to make that decision.

1           Yes, I would love to have a brand-new  
2   spanking new high school for my daughter Peyton to  
3   go to. I would love that. Everybody in Chicago  
4   wants that, but -- thank you. 30 seconds. But  
5   everybody can't have that. I would love that. I  
6   think there's another solution on the horizon.

7           I go to church right across the street  
8   from Phillips. I see that there are wonderful  
9   things going on there. It may not be attractive  
10  to us now, but that investment that you're placing  
11  in trying to displace NTA could be used to make  
12  Phillips a school that would be attractive for  
13  many to come to and encourage those who are afraid  
14  to go to to come.

15          SABRINA PERKINS: Good afternoon, everybody.  
16   Good afternoon. My name is Sabrina Perkins. I am  
17   a grandmother at National Teachers Academy with  
18   five granddaughters.

19          Closing NTA and trying to make a high  
20   school, I disagree with that. The staff at NTA  
21   has been excellent. I have been there from  
22   volunteer, even the teachers past they time to be  
23   there, like 6:00 o'clock. I know you off before  
24   that, right. Working diligently hard from what

1 I've been seeing volunteering.

2 When I see the teachers, they're working  
3 with the children, with the band. You've got the  
4 swimming team, basketball, baseball, football,  
5 soccer, and of course the different level for the  
6 children, working with them. And they grades was  
7 not good when they came there, but they pulled  
8 them up and working with the staff at National  
9 Teachers Academy.

10 And also I wasn't prepared to speak  
11 either. I wasn't going to speak, but I said let  
12 me come down and say what's on my mind because I  
13 think it's unfair to the children. And they say  
14 National Teachers Academy. True, national  
15 supposed to be for all the children, T for all the  
16 great teachers that's teaching there and all  
17 around the school, and Academy, which you will  
18 always be from what I know them.

19 Thank you. Have a good night.

20 KAYLA PERKINS: Hi. My name is Kayla  
21 Perkins. I am in 7th grade, and I am a proud  
22 student of National Teachers Academy. I have  
23 attended NTA since I was in kindergarten.

24 I feel this proposal is unacceptable and

1 should not be continued. CPS is trying to  
2 dismantle a community that has been around for  
3 long time, and now we're NTA family. CPS needs to  
4 be building up schools, not tearing them down.  
5 Black students lives' and their education matter,  
6 but they obviously can't see that. NTA needs to  
7 remain a Level 1 Plus elementary school and  
8 nothing less. NTA is here to stay.

9 TAYLOR WALLACE: Hi. My name is Taylor  
10 Wallace. I am in the 8th grade going to National  
11 Teachers Academy.

12 I shouldn't have to come here and fight  
13 for my school. Other students and staff shouldn't  
14 have to come here and fight for our school. I've  
15 been to plenty of meetings, and I'm not going to  
16 stop coming. Our message obviously haven't been  
17 to your brains. We're fighting and not stop  
18 fighting.

19 I've been at NTA since 1st grade and this  
20 is my last year, but I could never imagine NTA to  
21 be closed. This transition plan isn't just, and  
22 you know it is. This isn't racist, and you should  
23 own up to it and stop it. This will be my last  
24 year. This won't be my last -- this won't be the

1 last you've seen of me and my school. As a matter  
2 of fact, this is just a start.

3 The proposal to close NTA won't affect my  
4 education, but it will affect me emotionally. It  
5 will affect the little kids. Why can't they get  
6 the same education as me in the same community?

7 Do you think we're stupid enough to  
8 believe this plan is for the better? You say you  
9 listen. You say you listen to what we have to  
10 say, but do you really? Will you just say what I  
11 say goes? My peers do not want a seat at South  
12 Loop. Again, my peers do not want a seat South  
13 Loop. South Loop isn't NTA, and it will never be  
14 NTA. We will keep our seats at NTA. Why don't  
15 you let us?

16 You should want to set a meaningful  
17 example, not one that says "I have power and you  
18 don't." We're not stupid, and I am very, very far  
19 from stupid and so are my peers. We will not sit  
20 here and watch you take NTA. We will fight, and I  
21 can promise you we will fight.

22 JOANNIE LAPALIA: My name is Joannie Lapalia,  
23 and I too live in the 11th Ward. I too are on  
24 37th Street, just two blocks away from the

1 boundary.

2 My concern is, again, as another resident  
3 said, we have no high school. NTA family,  
4 parents, South Loop, Holding, Graham, none of us  
5 have a high school. Wendell Phillips is a Level 2  
6 academic probation. Tilden is the same. We have  
7 no high school.

8 And while I understand you're fighting  
9 for your community and your school, and I get  
10 that, I have three children in CPS, a fourth one  
11 going in next year, but I have no high school.  
12 That leaves us in a position to either leave our  
13 homes and move out of the city or pay for Catholic  
14 education. The taxes you are paying shouldn't  
15 require you or force you to pay for Catholic  
16 education.

17 I don't know if this decision is right or  
18 not to merge the two schools. South Loop is an  
19 excellent school. NTA is an excellent school. I  
20 really don't know the ramifications of it. But  
21 what I do know is none of us have a high school.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Phillips. Dunbar.

23 JOANNIE LAPALIA: Level 2 academic probation.  
24 You wouldn't send your kids to that school, and

1 neither would I.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Excuse me. Excuse me. She's  
3 speaking.

4 JOANNIE LAPALIA: With these boundaries, you  
5 have left out half of Bridgeport and all of  
6 Canaryville, who also do not have a high school.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Let me say this before the next  
9 speaker comes, please. Let me just say this.  
10 Every time somebody speaks, there's respect for  
11 them. If there's an opposition, then we want to  
12 shout them down. We need to hear those voices too  
13 out of respect for it. We don't always have to  
14 agree, but at least have respect. They have  
15 concerns. They are residents of this community,  
16 and they may be different from yours. But they  
17 have a right to express them, and we have a right  
18 to listen to them respectfully. So can we please  
19 encourage each other to do that.

20 Next speaker.

21 SPEAKER: I'm sitting here listening and  
22 listening to the young lady who just said  
23 something about, I shouldn't have to come here to  
24 fight for her school. And I have been coming to



1 every single hearing up until this point, and a  
2 lot of thought come into my mind. I really don't  
3 know where to start. But I think she gave the  
4 best version "I shouldn't have to fight for that  
5 school" because when we hear all the story, I can  
6 tell you that I'm deeply impressed with the  
7 advocacy of the NTA family.

8 You have put up a really good case. But  
9 Chinatown have not been able to tell story  
10 effectively because we never had a school. And  
11 maybe people don't even realize that. We had this  
12 neighborhood for over 100 years, and I personally  
13 have been listening to all the stories for 50  
14 years in this area.

15 And it's sadden me that we all try to  
16 solve problem that affect all of us, and none of  
17 us really have solve the problem for everybody.  
18 And it's turned into this racial issue about don't  
19 trust CPS, don't trust this, don't trust that.  
20 When we all take the action of, okay, we are not  
21 Chinatown, we have a meeting where people shedding  
22 tear about the NTA kids' experience. We look at  
23 all the situation.

24 We ask CPS would you listen to the NTA

1 people. You have to come up to an answer why this  
2 has to be a solution. The other thing, I also  
3 listen to my community. We never had a school for  
4 over hundred years. So what does that leave us?

5 And what if it turn into a situation  
6 where one coming against another. This is not  
7 what we want to. People talk about the race  
8 issue. I deal with that. I know about the tunnel  
9 issue between Chinatown and the African-American  
10 community. But 20-some years ago, I invited some  
11 black leaders to come with me to Chinatown leader.  
12 I personally in the '90s have gone over to meeting  
13 with them to make it let's deal with the crime  
14 issue, not race issue, and try to solve.

15 But we have our story to tell. Maybe we  
16 have not been able to tell that story effectively,  
17 but we have been waiting for long time too. But  
18 what is the proper solution? What is the best  
19 solution? We don't know. Let's not try to turn  
20 each other. Let's try to turn each other more  
21 listening.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. We have about 37  
23 minutes left, and we still have room for speakers.  
24 If you have spoken already, you can register again

1 to speak again and approach the microphone. If  
2 you have not and you do have a card, just bring it  
3 up and we will hear your comments at this time.

4 WENDY MILLER: My name is Wendy Miller.

5 MR. JOHNSON: The microphone is off. We have  
6 to wait on the sound lady one minute to turn the  
7 mic on.

8 WENDY MILLER: My name is Wendy Miller. I'm  
9 a parent of two lovely twins at NTA. NTA is  
10 special in a way that should be a beacon for CPS  
11 for families that need a better opportunity. My  
12 daughters are loved and are safe. They have  
13 opportunity to get to know people from different  
14 cultures, races, and learn from these wonderful  
15 people.

16 They are taken care of in a way that is  
17 more personal than just staff doing their job, and  
18 that is because NTA is a family, not just a  
19 school.

20 If you support CPS's proposal, you are  
21 complicit in the effort to ruin the education of  
22 continuity of over 700 elementary school children.  
23 You need to admit that to yourself and to your  
24 neighbors in this room who attend NTA. Admit that

1 you expect NTA families to sacrifice their school  
2 for your benefit, and admit that you feel your  
3 community's needs are more important than the  
4 needs of the NTA community.

5 To the steering committee, I know there's  
6 a couple of you here, you cannot just go to  
7 meetings and make a list in order to add NTA  
8 culture to a school that doesn't place the same  
9 value on all children. You cannot add family  
10 culture to a school whose leadership does not  
11 treat all families with respect. I had a daughter  
12 go there.

13 If you are happy at South Loop, that's  
14 fine, but do not assume you can sell South Loop  
15 values to families who something brighter on the  
16 south side of Cermak. NTA takes care of all its  
17 families. All children are valued equally and  
18 respected. Students are empowered to speak with  
19 their own strong, confident voice. NTA ignites  
20 momentum. They're building future leaders that  
21 are culturally aware and strive for just society.

22 Our students are courageous and lead with  
23 integrity. They stand up for what is right and  
24 speak against what is wrong. Our older students

1 set an excellent example for our young students,  
2 speaking up for their beliefs, standing up for  
3 what is right.

4 Is this proposal wrought in the Chicago  
5 way the best we can do for our future? Is  
6 anything that is the Chicago way in the best  
7 interest and the future of our students? I think  
8 not.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Next speaker.

10 SPEAKER: I didn't really prepare anything to  
11 deliver at this meeting because I sit here at this  
12 meeting just like I've gone to so many board  
13 meetings and so many other townhall meetings, and  
14 I think myself asking the same question of why are  
15 we here?

16 As you can see, there are very few  
17 people, even people are looking for a high school,  
18 who are strongly in support of this plan. It's  
19 obvious that the majority of the community and  
20 people who live within the boundaries of NTA  
21 oppose this plan. We've gone to countless  
22 meetings and talked about it. If you look at the  
23 numbers of who support and who's opposed, it's  
24 clear in majority of the lives in terms of who

1 will be affected. But that obviously doesn't  
2 matter. I'm honestly wondering, why are we even  
3 here for this show?

4 I think what is most important to me is I  
5 wonder when CPS releases this process of the  
6 school transition or whatever it's called, what  
7 weight or consideration is given to how a  
8 proposal, even if it originates within a  
9 community, or opposing, lack of better term,  
10 community, what consideration is given to that how  
11 proposal will affect most of these communities.

12 [Inaudible] for CPS in the past, there's  
13 evidence that it has a negative affect on GPA.  
14 GPAs decrease by about 10 percent. Decrease in  
15 attendance, decrease in attendance in college and  
16 high school. And again, you have the most  
17 vulnerable population, predominantly low income,  
18 predominantly African-American. I'm wondering  
19 where does that come into consideration in the  
20 proposal or in the way the CPS makes decisions  
21 period.

22 I think the other question that I have is  
23 if this proposal is really education and rooted in  
24 good thought, et cetera, et cetera, Janice Jackson

1 was quoted the other day saying on the radio if  
2 you look at the gifted students and the non-gifted  
3 students, they don't get into the same schools.  
4 In other words, they don't get to the same high  
5 schools. Not one gifted student has even  
6 graduated from NTA yet. As we said before, it  
7 only goes up to 8th grade.

8 So why lie? Why create the story? She  
9 also said at the board meeting that the  
10 achievement of NTA is due to the achievements of  
11 the gifted students. We have proven and have time  
12 and time again and told Alderman Dowell that the  
13 achievement from NTA is actually from the  
14 non-gifted students in the school, but you all  
15 keep perpetuating this story.

16 And what's more concerning to me is what  
17 are you saying to the students? And what about  
18 the immeasurable affects of these, GPA,  
19 attendance, and so forth, the humiliation, the  
20 disempowerment, the devaluing their achievement.  
21 No one ever comes back and says, no, we were  
22 wrong. It actually is your achievements. I know  
23 you're saying time, but I'm sorry. You can drag  
24 me from the mic. But what about the immeasurable

1 effects? If we don't get the answers to this,  
2 when do we get the answers? That's all I want to  
3 know.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Next speaker.

5 CHRIS HACKER: My name Chris Hacker. I'm a  
6 parent to a 2nd grade student at NTA. Happens to  
7 be in the RGC, but I'm not here about the RGC  
8 specifically.

9 Last speaker, I forget your name, but you  
10 just asked at the beginning, why are we here?  
11 Especially when it doesn't appear that we're being  
12 listened to. I'm here to bear witness. We see.  
13 We're watching. We're going to bring attention to  
14 this. We've been bringing attention to this.

15 I'm an engineer by training. I've run a  
16 software company. I'm an attorney. The numbers  
17 on this thing just don't make sense. You said  
18 that the current population, the current  
19 population of high school students in the area,  
20 2,000, and that nicely makes sense. And when I  
21 heard that, I said, oh, that's interesting, okay.  
22 That's the first time I heard those figures.

23 Then we hear the other figures that  
24 there's roughly 500 students per grade coming up



1 in the boundary. If that's accurate, you know,  
2 then half of those students who would be entitled  
3 to a seat won't be able to get one. Now, that's  
4 half of each grade. Right? So the math doesn't  
5 work.

6 I don't understand, you know, the  
7 approach. I don't understand -- again this last  
8 speaker said and others have said -- the lies, the  
9 misstatements. And clearly the fix is in and has  
10 been. This is a political decision. It's not an  
11 educational decision. And again, we're watching.  
12 You know, I'm a proud Chicagoan. I am not proud  
13 about this.

14 BETHANN AMSTELL: My name is Bethann Amstell.  
15 I have given multiple speeches at these meetings  
16 before. I've tried to argue with facts. I'm a  
17 pediatrician. I try to talk about all our kids  
18 who are African-American do better than the kids  
19 at South Loop. I've tried to argue with lots of  
20 other facts, but no one listens.

21 So let me tell you some things that I  
22 want to be on record. I have spent the last 6  
23 months calling the entire phone list of NTA. Do  
24 you know I have not gotten one parent who supports

1 this. Not one. I have gone knocking door to door  
2 at Long Grove Homes. Do you know that I did not  
3 get one parent that supports this. I want this on  
4 record.

5 CPS, why aren't you knocking on doors?  
6 Why aren't you going to [inaudible] homes, Long  
7 Grove Homes. Alderman Dowell, this is your ward.  
8 Why aren't you knocking on doors? Our community  
9 does not want this. [Inaudible] community, people  
10 do not support this. I know this by calling,  
11 knocking on doors. I've gone to City Hall. I've  
12 taken the kids.

13 Stop demeaning our kids. Our kids know  
14 what this proposal means. Don't tell them that  
15 they don't know. They know if they're in 7th  
16 grade, they could go to this high school. They  
17 know this is unjust. This is not an equitable  
18 plan.

19 When I knock on these doors, when I talk  
20 to these families, this is what they're telling  
21 me: You know what? We got kicked out of South  
22 Loop 10, 13 years ago. I don't know how many it  
23 was. And nobody gave a crap. So why do we show  
24 up at these meetings? What's the point of it?

1 That's how they feel.

2 So it's not we're a small group of  
3 people. We are not a small group of people that  
4 oppose this. People are tired of coming and  
5 giving their testimony and have it not count.

6 But I want it on record that all the  
7 people I call and all the people I talk to don't  
8 support this. I've also want it on record that  
9 I've been videotaping these, and they're going to  
10 be on nrc.com.

11 And I want you to see these stories, and  
12 I want to leave you with one last story about the  
13 woman who didn't get to come and give her  
14 testimony. Her name is Ms. Peaches. She goes by  
15 that. And you'll see her videos out soon. And  
16 she has lived in Long Grove Homes for 20 years.  
17 And she takes the kids to school back and forth  
18 every day.

19 And she says not a single family there  
20 supports this proposal. And you can see her video  
21 coming up because my time is up.

22 One last thing, 37th, I know Bridgeport.  
23 37th and south, those are \$500,000 homes. This is  
24 much different than Long Grove where you go to

1 that house and a parent that's a family that has  
2 three kids and one guardian that's supposed to  
3 take them from building to building with three  
4 schools. That's not the same thing.

5 ERICA: Hello. Can you hear me? Hello. My  
6 name is Erica [inaudible]. I'm with Parents For  
7 Teachers. We are 100 percent behind the families,  
8 students, teachers, staff, at NTA. We think what  
9 CPS is doing here is just wrong.

10 I know former CPS parents. I have two  
11 kids who graduated from CPS. I can tell you CPS  
12 would never have attempted to do something like  
13 this to the schools that my children went to. And  
14 I think we -- I would just like some honesty. If  
15 it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's  
16 a duck.

17 This is a racist school closing. No  
18 different than what they're trying to do in  
19 Englewood. They're trying to dress it up. No  
20 different than what they did in 2013. Again,  
21 they're trying to dress it up. But it is the  
22 exact same situation where low-income black  
23 families are being shoved aside for bigger  
24 interests.

1           And there's no reason to expect that the  
2 affects and the consequences will be any different  
3 than in 2013. Ask any family that went through  
4 that transition and had their kids go to one of  
5 those receiving schools, they are uniformly  
6 unhappy. That was a disaster, and this transition  
7 plan, sending the NTA kids over to South Loop, is  
8 going to be a disaster too.

9           And not only for the NTA families but for  
10 the families at South Loop, this will not work.  
11 The school is more than a building. It's a  
12 community. It's a culture. These are real  
13 people, real people's lives that you're messing  
14 with.

15           And it just makes me wonder, you know,  
16 the one difference between 2013 and today is that  
17 NTA has met up the benchmarks. They're playing by  
18 all the rules, and they still are being sabotaged.  
19 It just makes me wonder, what do low-income black  
20 families in the city have to do to get justice?  
21 What do you have to do to get change? They're  
22 playing by all of the rules, and you're still  
23 trying to destroy them.

24           So we're behind you. We can do whatever

1 we can, 100 percent to support you. And I really  
2 urge the people who are in favor of this plan, you  
3 cannot obtain a benefit for your family and your  
4 children at the expense of someone else's  
5 children. A harm to one children -- a harm to one  
6 child is a harm to all children, and we have to  
7 stop these hunger games and come together and  
8 demand what's right for all students and all  
9 families, black, white, Asian, in Bridgeport, at  
10 NTA, at Englewood. This has to stop.

11 SHANTELL BOSTON: Hello. My name is Shantell  
12 Boston, and I'm a parent of three children who  
13 attend NTA currently.

14 NTA has not only been a great school for  
15 my kids to attend and receive a great education,  
16 but NTA has been a great support system to help  
17 single mothers like myself to keep pushing and  
18 have hope and faith in my kids when I have felt  
19 like giving up.

20 The staff at NTA has been like family to  
21 me, and I would hate to see such a great school  
22 close. My question of the night is why. This  
23 proposal in question is a benefit to who?

24 Well, it's a huge disadvantage and a huge

1 inconvenience to my family and I, seeing I am a  
2 single mother and I have three children who attend  
3 NTA. Why would you take something so great and  
4 tear it apart? Not only has the staff at NTA  
5 worked so hard to get to where they are now, being  
6 a Level 1 Plus school, but most importantly the  
7 students. And this is their reward for all their  
8 hard work and effort? It's not right at all.

9 What is this teaching our children? That  
10 no matter how hard they push to become great,  
11 someone will always be there to push you back  
12 down. Well, this is exactly what this proposal is  
13 teaching our kids.

14 To the kids and staff of NTA, I speak for  
15 myself -- and I'm sure I speak for the rest of our  
16 parents -- we are here to teach our generation,  
17 never back down without fighting for what you  
18 believe.

19 Thank you.

20 SUDA MANSOUR: Hi. This is Suda Mansour. I  
21 am proud parent of my son at NTA. This is my  
22 first time speaking in this meeting. I have  
23 always sat in the back silently because I'm an  
24 immigrant to this country 11 years ago.

1 I haven't gone to school in this country.  
2 But seeing all of this is really, really  
3 interesting to me. Just seeing -- I was forced  
4 when I was 9 years old to go out of my school  
5 because of a war in my country. I'm from a  
6 country that most of you can't even pronounce  
7 correct.

8 So seeing this that CPS has created feels  
9 the same. These neighborhoods that are all  
10 fighting for a high school or elementary is the  
11 same scene as war without a bomb, without an  
12 atomic bomb. So it's the same thing. We're just  
13 making people fight over things that is  
14 unnecessarily.

15 NTA, Mr. Castelaz and his fantastic team  
16 is already great example of making the school a  
17 great school. Why can't we do the same thing for  
18 the two high schools that are already there and  
19 spend the money that turn NTA into schools, this  
20 is a real example. We're not talking about  
21 assumptions. It's fact. It's right there.  
22 Everyone can go and visit it every day. They're  
23 doing a great, fantastic job. I don't have a  
24 family in Chicago, but this community is my



1 family. So you're destroying that family.

2 CLYDE HUBERT: How are you doing? My name is  
3 Clyde Hubert. I have two sons at NTA, one in  
4 kindergarten and one in 1st grade. And I also  
5 have a brother that graduated from NTA. His name  
6 is Malcolm Green. Now, he's on his way to  
7 Harvard. Harvard.

8 You're talking about NTA as being that  
9 foundation. That was his foundation. Now he's  
10 uilding his house. He did go to a  
11 selective-enrollment high school, but he went to  
12 NTA first. So NTA laid that foundation, now he's  
13 building his house, and going to Harvard and  
14 putting a roof on his house.

15 So without NTA as that foundation, he  
16 wouldn't be able to do that. And I have two  
17 younger sons and nephews that want to follow in  
18 his footsteps and do those same exact things. If  
19 [inaudible] kindergarten and 1st grade, they won't  
20 be able to succeed. They're not going to  
21 accomplish the same thing he accomplished. No,  
22 they will, they're going to work hard, but they  
23 want to see the same teachers he had, do the same  
24 things he did in the same place. They don't want

1 to do it differently.

2 I could send my kids anywhere in the city  
3 to go to school. We chose NTA. It's a family and  
4 something we love. So let's keep this school open  
5 for everybody else.

6 LATASHA WATKINS: Hi. My name is Latasha  
7 Watkins. I have a child at NTA. Hopefully will  
8 have two more there in the coming years.

9 I am tired. I am so tired of this  
10 process. As a resident of Chicago, who pays my  
11 fair share of taxes too, I'm tired of fighting for  
12 my child to be in a school that is a good school  
13 and that he deserves to be in and the school that  
14 I chose.

15 I don't want my child at South Loop. It  
16 is not the environment that I wanted, which is why  
17 I chose NTA, which is performing well. And you  
18 wonder why, Chip, we're boisterous and upset and  
19 responding because we're tired. Every time we  
20 come here, we express how we feel. We have  
21 brought you facts. We have brought you  
22 information on the negative outcomes of the  
23 students. We have talked about in general how  
24 white students get more than black students. We

1 brought everything we could bring, and it still  
2 feels like you're not listening to us.

3         It still feels like this plan, we're  
4 going to push this plan no matter what the  
5 community said. We'll hold our three meetings to  
6 make sure we check that box. But I'm tired, and I  
7 know the other parents are tired. And I  
8 understand the parents from Long Grove and  
9 Hillards don't show up. This has been just going  
10 on since what, March for me and I'm as tired as I  
11 am.

12         So CPS, I need to ask you, where are the  
13 facts that you need to bring to us. If you are  
14 proposing to make a change to a school, I believe  
15 that your motto should be first do no harm to  
16 those students. Where is the data that says that  
17 this is going to result in better goals.

18         Integration is not the goal. Integration  
19 is not the outcome. Where is the academic  
20 evidence based upon studies and information that  
21 should already exist about how these students are  
22 going to fair better. And if they are not, then  
23 why are we following this plan and why are we  
24 pushing it?

1 Alderman Dowell, I would expect your  
2 support to make sure that these students are well  
3 taken care of. I heard you on time. But one  
4 thing I want to make sure everybody else here  
5 knows, we're all here talking about this because  
6 nobody, nobody is getting what they want with this  
7 plan. You're not getting a high school to  
8 accommodate enough students, and then we're taking  
9 one from other students. Nobody is getting what  
10 they want. We deserve that, and we deserve much  
11 better. So push for that.

12 NAKETA BRAR: I'm a little shorter. My name  
13 Naketa Brar. I am the executive director of  
14 Chicago United For Equity. I'm excited to be here  
15 today to hear all your voices.

16 And there are two central questions that  
17 we have been raising in our racial equity  
18 assessment. First of all, a racial equity  
19 assessment is let's take a look at the plan.  
20 Let's ask ourselves two questions: Who gets the  
21 benefit? Who bears the burden?

22 And if the burdens are borne by the same  
23 people that have borne burdens by Chicago's  
24 planning in the past, the same families who have

1    been burdened in the past, the same racial groups,  
2    black and Latino families predominantly in Chicago  
3    who have borne the burdens of racist policies,  
4    then we have to say to ourselves, that's not  
5    right.

6           Now, I hear that there are families here  
7    who have come forward who didn't know about this  
8    plan before today, and they're just interested in  
9    a high school. And I would say to you it's okay  
10   for you to have intention for something good for  
11   your child. Everybody has that.

12           But what I would say to you also is now  
13   that you know it does something where it puts a  
14   burden on black families in Chicago, low-income  
15   black families in Chicago, you have to ask  
16   yourself a question: Does your intention to have  
17   something for your child come before your  
18   intention to be antiracist?

19           Antiracist is different than not being a  
20   racist. Not being a racist means I am not going  
21   to actively do something against black people,  
22   Latino people, people of different races. Being  
23   antiracist means that when I see something that's  
24   going on that is disproportionately burdening

1 people of color, that I'm going to stand up and  
2 I'm going to speak loud and I'm going to speak the  
3 truth.

4 And the truth of this situation is that  
5 we've brought in people from all across the City  
6 of Chicago who have no interest in this matter, 76  
7 fellows who we trained in this methodology.

8 Alderman Dowell, they're some of the folks that  
9 you work with in academic institutions all over  
10 the city, who are people that CPS and done some of  
11 their consulting work in the past. These are  
12 people that have come forward with no  
13 self-interest, and they have found this plan is  
14 racially unjust.

15 And so what I invite you to do now is  
16 join us at the very last meeting of that racial  
17 equity assessment. It is Thursday, this Thursday,  
18 2 days from now, 5:30 at National Teachers  
19 Academy, 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. And the point of that  
20 meeting is to say, look, we all want something out  
21 of this plan. This plan is not serving people  
22 equitably, so how do we fix it? We know the  
23 collective intelligence in this room can come up  
24 with something better. Chinatown, Bridgeport,

1 NTA, South Loop, you can all come forward and  
2 devise something that works better for all of us.

3 PAUL KENT: Hello. My name is Paul Kent.  
4 I'm representing Rush University Medical Center.  
5 I am not an interested party, so I cannot be  
6 looked at as someone self-serving.

7 We, me and my partner, Dr. Ansell,  
8 studied health equity and social justice. I asked  
9 my medical students who I teach, what do you think  
10 the biggest risk to your health is in America?  
11 Most of them say diabetes, smoking, family  
12 history, things like that. It's not even close.

13 What do you think the biggest risk to  
14 your health in America is? Poverty. Poverty and  
15 education.

16 Now, I have had many foster children  
17 through the years, three of which I have adopted,  
18 who have struggled, had been exposed to drugs. I  
19 have a child who's HIV positive. All of them are  
20 doing great now. Why do you think they're doing  
21 great now? Because I'm white, and they go to good  
22 schools. That's why. They have had opportunity  
23 that these children do not have.

24 I also recruit for Harvard. My kids have

1 that chance. Not because of their background, but  
2 because of the opportunity simply because of where  
3 I live in River Forest. These people, this  
4 school, these kids have those opportunities, and  
5 that's being taken away. There should be shame in  
6 the room in the people who are doing this. I  
7 heard about this just yesterday. And I want you  
8 to know that people who study social justice and  
9 health equity, scientists such as myself, I have  
10 degrees in mathematics from Harvard, we're going  
11 to look at your data. I have no doubt what we're  
12 going to see is this is direct institutional  
13 racist directly.

14 Thank you.

15 SPEAKER: It's me. I'm back again. I just  
16 wanted to get one thing on the record that has not  
17 been said yet, and I think it's important to say.  
18 I know that no one from the South Loop community  
19 has come up and spoken. I'm sure there are people  
20 there in the audience thinking that school is  
21 going to be fine, my school is going to be fine.

22 No, it's not going to be fine. What has  
23 not been put up, which we cannot forget, is that  
24 in conjunction with this plan of destroying NTA,



1 we're also talking about destroying South Loop  
2 Elementary. How are we destroying it? We are  
3 destroying it by turning it into a Franken school.  
4 We are talking about taking three buildings, 1212  
5 South Plymouth, the new building at 16th and  
6 Dearborn, and the preschool annex on Archer and  
7 Clark, and calling all of that South Loop  
8 Elementary.

9           There will be almost 2,000 students  
10 spread out among three buildings that stretch all  
11 the way from 12th to 16th to a little bit west on  
12 Archer and Cermak. I want you to think about that  
13 for a moment. Many of you, like I, have more than  
14 one child. We made all of these schools have the  
15 exact same start time. Have you seen the traffic  
16 around 1212 South Plymouth alone? Have you ever  
17 tried to go to Mariano's or drop a kid off at  
18 Daystar at any time of the day? It is a  
19 nightmare.

20           And what we are now talking about is  
21 trying to get 2,000 children into three buildings  
22 and give them a great education with one  
23 administration. There is no data that supports  
24 this being a quality option.

1           Smaller schools are better. Contiguous  
2 schools where all children from K through 8th  
3 grade in the same building learn from each other.  
4 This is what makes a great school. And I  
5 guarantee you that if this horrible plan comes  
6 through, comes to life, and all of us at NTA are  
7 forced to join this Franken school, that Level 1  
8 Plus rating is gone.

9           So I just want you to think about this.  
10 Even if you're for NTA as a high school but what  
11 you are now for is for your Franken school to drop  
12 in its rating and for your children to lose out on  
13 their education.

14         SPEAKER: Chip, thank you for offering for us  
15 to get another card. I took you up on that.

16           I think that I just -- I just also wanted  
17 to go on record with the question of where this  
18 plan originated. Because with the guidelines that  
19 were issued with CPS for school actions, it said  
20 community members can request a school action be  
21 made.

22           But what has never been made clear for  
23 this particular plan is where this originated  
24 from. As far as NTA families can tell, the only

1 record of where this plan was originated was the  
2 email that we did see from Alderman Pat Dowell  
3 that talked about a meeting with Mayor Rahm  
4 Emanuel, a meeting with Tina from Prairie District  
5 Alliance.

6 And let's just be clear. None of those  
7 people on that email are community members of  
8 either of the schools. And it is important, I  
9 know we talked about being respectful to Tina when  
10 she was up here, and I hate to name names, but  
11 when you are a real estate agent who stands to  
12 gain from this and you have nothing to lose, of  
13 course you're going to stand here in support of  
14 it. And that's not where the community initiative  
15 should come from. That's called a conflict of  
16 interest, just so we're clear.

17 And I want to go on record asking CPS,  
18 where did this plan originate from? If this is  
19 your requirement for a school action, where are  
20 you documenting where this plan originated from  
21 and you can show all of us. Since we've been  
22 called conspiracy theorists, this is the thing,  
23 I've been called a conspiracy theorist by Frank  
24 Clark or whatever.

1           Also, on the PD&A website, again the same  
2 organization that Tina represents, I once saw a  
3 comment that said with NTA being 80 percent low  
4 income, is it any wonder why we don't send our  
5 children there. So if you think about that for a  
6 second, if anybody needs a screen shot, I have it.  
7 With 80 percent low income, that's the reason  
8 they're not sending their children there, and  
9 that's the impetus for this plan.

10           And if you're standing with this plan,  
11 know that you are standing with that mindset. And  
12 I just also want to mention through this process,  
13 NTA, the story of NTA, the sad story of what has  
14 been going on in this community for so many years  
15 has already been written up in two books, and I  
16 talked to a person who's writing a third book on  
17 this very topic. And I just want for everybody to  
18 think to themselves, when this is documented, like  
19 the researcher said earlier, we are looking at  
20 your data, your research, your numbers. Are you  
21 showing your children that you are standing on the  
22 right side of history?

23           When this is documented, how will you  
24 explain the stance that you took and who you stole

1 from another community that was already  
2 vulnerable? How will you explain that to them?

3 And, by the way, to the lady who said we  
4 don't have a high school, Phillips is a Level 2,  
5 would you send your child there, I want to also go  
6 on record that I picked to NTA when it was, you're  
7 right, not a Level 2 school, it was a Level 3.  
8 Level 3. Because I understood what was happening  
9 at that school, and I saw it before it happened.  
10 And we are blessed and proud to be a part of the  
11 NTA community, and we don't have any intention of  
12 letting them take it away.

13 Thank you.

14 LAILA WALKER: Hi, everybody. My name is  
15 Laila Walker, and I go to South Loop Elementary  
16 School. I'm in the 3rd grade. And I just wanted  
17 to say that I think that my school shouldn't be  
18 trying to shut down any other school, and no  
19 school should be trying to shut down any other  
20 school. And I just wanted to apologize for what  
21 my school was trying to do. And if I had known,  
22 because I just found out today, if I had known, I  
23 probably would have tried to do something about  
24 it.

1 MR. JOHNSON: This is our last speaker.

2 SPEAKER: I want to put a few more things in  
3 since NTA parents get 2 minutes' time all the  
4 time. So I wanted to finish a couple statements.

5 One, [inaudible] on behalf of a 3rd  
6 grader, because I don't think this has been on the  
7 record yet, when I was at Long Grove Homes, one of  
8 the main concerns of families there is this. And  
9 this follows up on Elizabeth's complaint, but her  
10 name is Akia. Her dad's name is Maurice. There's  
11 three kids in the family, a one-year-old, a third  
12 grader, and fifth grader.

13 Under the new proposal, their grandpa  
14 walks them to school every day. These kids are  
15 going to be at different schools. That is the  
16 major concern of the communities where there's a  
17 lot of grandparents or people like Ms. Peaches,  
18 who walks these kids to school, is how  
19 logistically are they going to walk them.

20 And it's more than just about travel.  
21 This little girl, only 5th grade, was worried  
22 about what's going to happen to my baby brother or  
23 sister that I can't look out for.

24 So to go back to my point, Bridgeport

1 people, I hear you that you want a high school.  
2 But it is different to live in 500-, \$600,000  
3 homes than to live in Long Grove and have your  
4 grandparent have to be transporting you to three  
5 different schools.

6 So I think -- think about what side  
7 you're going to stand on and stand on the right  
8 side of justice when you're thinking about these  
9 things. It's easy for us to say I'm not a racist,  
10 but maybe we should all take a look at ourselves  
11 and think maybe there's a little part of me that's  
12 racist or a big part of me that's racist and do  
13 something about that.

14 My other thing to think about is this:  
15 If this is engaging all of the community, all of  
16 you elected officials need to keep your elected  
17 official pages open for public comments.

18 MR. JOHNSON: We'd like to thank everybody  
19 tonight for comments.

20 I do want to share with you who's in the  
21 room so that if you have any questions for them.  
22 From Office of Diverse Learner Supports and  
23 Services, ODLSS, Shani Boone and Luis Rodriguez,  
24 would you please stand just so they know who you

1 are in the rear if they have any questions.

2 For Students in Temporary Living  
3 Situations, Onshelle Blackmon. There she is back  
4 there.

5 And then from the Talent Office, Tiffany  
6 Taylor. They will be at the back table, if you  
7 have any specific questions for them.

8 I'd also like to make you aware our next  
9 community meeting will be held next Tuesday,  
10 January 16th, at the Second Presbyterian Church,  
11 1936 South Michigan, from 6:00 to 8:00 o'clock  
12 p.m.

13 Thank you all for being respectful.  
14 Thank you all for coming. Be safe going home.

15 (WHICH WERE ALL THE PROCEEDINGS HAD.)  
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1 STATE OF ILLINOIS )  
2 ) SS.  
3 COUNTY OF COOK )  
4

5 Rachel F. Gard, being first duly sworn,  
6 on oath says that she is a Certified Shorthand  
7 Reporter, Registered Professional Reporter, and  
8 Certified Realtime Reporter doing business in the  
9 City of Chicago, County of Cook and the State of  
10 Illinois;

11 That she reported in shorthand the  
12 proceedings had at the foregoing meeting;

13 And that the foregoing is a true and  
14 correct transcript of her shorthand notes so taken  
15 as aforesaid and contains all the proceedings had  
16 at the said meeting.

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RACHEL F. GARD, CSR, RPR, CRR  
CSR No. 084-003324  
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<b>A</b>	<b>action</b> 6:7,14	<b>affect</b> 22:17	<b>allegiance</b>	<b>Applause</b> 4:9	85:17
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